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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

FOR OES/OMC JAMES HOGAN, WHA/EPSC, WHA/CAR
USDOC FOR NOAA - JEFF GEARHART, JACK FORRESTER, ERIC HAWK

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: EFIN SENV ETRD TD
SUBJECT: SHRIMP-TURTLE: TRINIDAD & TOBAGO UPDATE

REF: (A) 08 State 45122 (B) 09 State 45122
(C) 09 State 36739

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: State/OES requested Post follow up on the January 2009 Turtle Excluder Device (TED) Certification Visit. EconOff spoke with GOTT Fisheries officials Elizabeth Mohammed and Luanna Martin concerning their progress. No progress has been made since GOTT failed to regain the Section 609 certification. The Fisheries Division remains hopeful that the Draft Fisheries Management Regulations, currently on the legislative agenda, will be passed this year. END SUMMARY.

Positive Policy Changes

¶2. (SBU) The Fisheries Division published a Draft Policy for the Fisheries in June of 2007. The Draft Fisheries Management Regulations, if passed, will give force to this policy. The policy document states that GOTT will ensure the protection of turtles is consistent with international agreements and conventions. Guided by the new policy, GOTT will also reduce turtle capture and mortality.

¶3. (SBU) The 1916 Fisheries Act allows for a limited turtle hunting season. The 1958 Conservation of Wild Life Act prohibits the capture of turtles. GOTT recognizes this inconsistency and, under the new policy, will harmonize the legal regime for marine turtle protection. Mohammed indicated that the main obstacle is Tobago, where it is traditional to harvest sea turtles for food. The policy document includes discussion of creating alternative employment opportunities for stakeholders affected by the new turtle protections.

Delayed Push for Locally Made TEDS

¶4. (SBU) During the January 2009 visit, representatives from State/OES and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) urged the Fisheries Division to encourage fishers and stakeholders to construct TEDs locally. Fisheries officials agree that locally constructed TEDs would save stakeholders money and deny them of the excuse that TEDs are too expensive. However, they cited staffing shortages as the reason they have been unable to conduct the desired outreach.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: While the Fisheries Division appears committed to a successful TEDs program, achieving the certification standard U.S. law requires will take both political support and resources that are currently lacking. END COMMENT

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